

The Sabbath Decade

August 1, 2003

A young Rabbi said to my friend, who was breathlessly describing her life with her two children, five and eight years of age, “We need to find that quiet within the whirlwind. That’s what *Shabat* (*sabbath*) is all about.”

That’s what the seventh decade is all about, too. Nature calls for a time of contemplation, a time of quiet thoughtfulness, a time to celebrate *unproductive* behavior like reading, swimming, dreaming in the late afternoon summertime sun, hangin’ out with friends...

The seventies – a decade of *Shabat!*

Now it is my work to convince myself that each day is Shabat. In my sixties I wrote a rough haiku:

At sixty
Sunday comes more often,
Daily, even.

Now, in my seventies, it is Saturday or *Shabat* which is a daily dose of contemplation, ease, quiet, reading, prayer, study, hangin’ out with God – which comes daily, even. The joys of *Shabat* are not customary in our society, where the Sabbath rarely keeps us from doing grocery shopping for the week, or catching sales at the local K or W mart, or slipping off to the current blockbuster film in an air-conditioned theatre. We race to the beach and kick sand into the face of the weakling on our right or left, while shaking out from our blanket the sand kicked there by the strongman in front of us. In the fall, we spend the afternoon with 100,000 shouting fans at a major league football game via TV; or accompany our Boys of October to the World Series.

Well, that’s our current world – that’s the reality our interior *Shabat* must address. The Sabbath at seventy is not a calendar date, it is an attitude of the heart. It is facing our intensive whirlwind reality with the realization that this universe is not meaningless, or fatherless but beloved, adored and cared for. It is the calm sense of joy in that smiling glance at the meaning of life and death.

Let’s light a candle together to celebrate the *Shabat* and ask: *How is this decade different from all the others?*